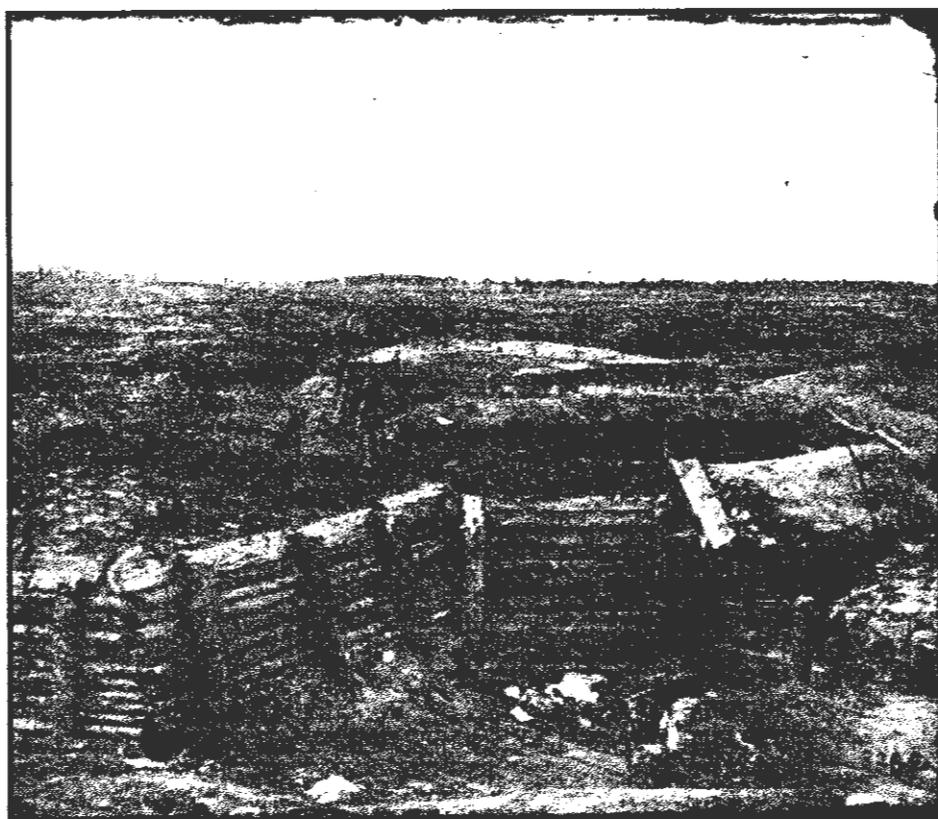


MS. 6. 1

# LTC. Charles Cummings Letters of 1864



Confederate Entrenchments at Petersburg  
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Burlington, February 12, 1864

My Dear Wife,

I arrived at Burlington Wednesday night via Woodstock. I am placed in command of the camp of Rendezvous of Recruits for the 17<sup>th</sup> Regiment Vermont Volunteers and my duties in this connection are numerous and varied. My guide thereto is experience and common sense. I am to make the camp are "institution" received the recruit from the recruiting officer assign them quarters, attended to their inspection feed and clothing, quarter and discipline and etc. Last night the first installment, save the company already here of eight arrived. They are from Ludlow. Men are coming to night and so they will continue to arrive daily.

My headquarters are on the ground in a new two-story building for the field officers below and the line officer above. My room is a little larger than our bedroom with a stove, extempore table stand, and drew of the American House who put up the building and feed the troops, furnished me with a cricky bed, a mattress and two used pillows – so I am as comfortable as I need he. I now take my meals with the barracks and have come down to the ordinary routine of camp life, for it is quite as well to begin now as to board at a hotel and they have to make the change.

I have no news to write, as I have seen no one except on business. I shall endeavor to be at home next Sunday morning at 4 o'clock a.m. and stay until Monday night.

Tell Lizzie and Charley that Papa is well and that he thinks of them quite often, and that in a five days he will be at home soon to see them.

Col. Randall is appointed Colonel of the 17<sup>th</sup>., so I shall have to make the best of it. Dr. Edson is to be the surgeon. He is now assistant surgeon of the cavalry.

The 17<sup>th</sup> Regiment is assigned to Burnside Corps. I though it would be you know. Well, I shall be with six or seven Massachusetts Regiments and with others from New England.

I am my dear wife, Your Loving husband, Charles.

Burlington, Monday – Morning

My Dear Wife;

I arrived safe Saturday afternoon. Yesterday morning I attended Episcopal service. In the afternoon I rode with B. B. Smalley over pretty much the route we went winter before last. The remainder of the day I spent purposing my book for the fair. In the evening I proposed call on Mr. Underwood whom we saw here. Upon going down stairs I found Mr. Who said that his wife was out watching with a sick person. But he invited three or four of us who even present to his house. We went down and spent a pleasant evening until twelve o'clock. I shall call on Mr. U, this week. Mr., and Mrs. Burton are not in town.

I am quite well and everything looks nice for the fair. The weather is charming. Your presence would give a finishing touch. By the way at 7 or 7-¼ pm., look low in the northwest for Donate's comet. It can be seen easily. I will write again, I must in a day or two.

Faithfully yours, loving Charles .

Burlington, February 16<sup>th</sup>, 1864

My Dear Wife,

I wrote you last Friday and put the letter in the office myself. Why it did not reach you Saturday I cannot say. Yours of the 14<sup>th</sup> was received this morning.

I am in command of the Camp of Rendezvous for Recruits for the 17<sup>th</sup> Regiment, receiving them from recruiting officers, examining them with the surgeon, and temporarily organizing them. There is more work in this than in running an organized regiment.

Colonel Randall is appointed Colonel of the regiment and the regiment is assigned to Burnside's Corps as I anticipated.

My health is good, my digestion good, and I sleep well barring thinking of you and the babies.

I shall endeavor to go home on the next Saturday night train, arriving at Brattleboro Sunday morning at 4 o'clock a.m. Perhaps when you lock the door Saturday night you had better put on key under the mat outside so that I can get in.

If you get this letter Wednesday, as you should, you may re-mail my letters to Burlington Thursday. I shall then get them Friday morning and can answer them before I go home.

Last night Colonel Goodrich of General Burnside's staff was here to make inquires as to the raising of the 17<sup>th</sup> regiment. All the New England Regiments – including five from New Hampshire, several from Massachusetts, Maine, and Connecticut are to be in this corps. This will be pleasant.

I have no Burlington news to communicate for I have not been about the village any. Tell Lizzie and Charley that Papa is coming home in a few days when he will hold them; so they must be good children and do just what their mamma tells them.

I congratulate you on your getting through with Ellen and that she has gone. I hope you have got a good girl now.

I am my dear wife, Your Loving Husband, Charles

PS Tell Mr. Brown to sent Davenport's bill to him at Newfane tomorrow. He wants it.

Burlington, February 26<sup>th</sup>, 1864

My Dear Wife,

I arrived safely in Burlington Tuesday morning, and found everything straight. I am suffering with the worst cold I have had this winter. The warm weather of Tuesday and Wednesday induced such a thaw that I was compelled to see to the drainage of our camp. So I was out with my old and thin boots on and carelessly remained at work with wet feet, after having worn top boots several days. Yesterday I laid on my bunk most all day. Today I am better but juicy enough. My cold is in my head almost entirely so that the consequences are more unpleasant than hazardous.

I have no news to write. I trust you and the little ones are all well. I received your note enclosing Capt. Rice's letter. Some how folks think I can get any office or appointment for them I choose.

I neglected to write in season for our carrier so I send this by special messenger. Thereupon it is brief.

Kiss the little darling for me,

Your loving husband Charles.

Burlington, March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1864

My Dear Wife,

Yours was duly received. I am nearly recovered from my cold which was very severe. It was just like the one I had a year since at Fairfax Station, but it did not get so permanently fixed. It was in my head and windpipe but not on my lungs.

We have three companies mustered in and shall probably have two more mustered in this week. I shall be mustered in as soon as the fourth company is mustered. As soon as possible, after six companies are mustered in it is proposed that I shall leave with the battalion for the rendezvous of Burnside's Corps. The remaining companies to be filled as soon thereafter as possible the Colonel mustered in and join us.

I shall not be able to come home Saturday of this week. But the battalion will go home here probably next week to Brattleboro where they will remain several days to be paid and complete their outfit. So I shall have an opportunity to be at home some more.

Then is nothing new or interesting about which to write. I am quite busy in arranging for the muster of the men here etc, etc.

Give my love to our dear little ones and to mother.

It is perhaps unnecessary to add that I shall be glad to be with you as much as possible before leaving and like the arrangement for us to go to Brattleboro.

Yours, Loving Husband – Charles

Burlington, March 11, 1864

My Dear Wife,

It is the driest, dullest place for news conceivable here in Burlington; hence I have nothing new or interesting to write.

You remember the rain and snow and slush at Brattleboro Monday. Well there was ten inches of snow in Burlington, the most they have had at anyone time this winter and it hangs on well. At Rutland there was more, so much that General Davis who left Cavendish on the same train that leaves Brattleboro at 10:40 a.m., did not arrive at Burlington sooner than I did who left at 9 in the evening and went 40 miles further. This snowstorm interferes with our drilling materially.

In relation to the battalion but is no news. I suppose the Governor, General Davis, and General Washburn are in conclave at Montpelier today to make a Major, Adjutant, and Quartermaster so we shall soon know soon who our officers are. I do not think there will be any further organization of companies this week, but next the matter will be determined.

My health is pretty good although I have not yet recovered fully from my cold. But I experience no particular trouble therefore.

Here is camp order is gradually evolving from chaos and now the four organized companies have their guns and equipments things wear a military aspect.

I have been reading McClellan's report. While I concede to him a certain military ability of high order I am painfully impressed with his hesitancy and quarrelest in obeying orders. How different his report from what Grant's will be!

Enclosed is a slip cut from the New York Times of Tuesday, noticing the death of your friend Mrs. Redfield.

Give my love to Lizzie and Charles and to mother.  
Affectionately - Yours, loving husband - Charles

*Redfield, In Lene, South Italy, on Sunday February 14, after a lingering illness, Elizabeth Easton, wife of J.S. Redfield, US Consul at Toronto in the 37<sup>th</sup> year of her age.*

Burlington, March 17<sup>th</sup>, 1864

My Dear Wife,

Since I last wrote you the aspect of affairs is materially changed so far as concerns the 17<sup>th</sup> Regiment. Extraordinary efforts are now making to fill the regiment; and for that purpose many officers are detailed and over a hundred enlisted men furloughed for the purposes of each securing a recruit. From present indicators it appears as if the regiment would be filled to at least the minimum number within three weeks and fully organized.

I do not believe that we shall get away much before the 1<sup>st</sup> of May.

My health is very good. My work is arduous in this mixed condition of things so I shall not be able to be at home this week. Mr. Mead is here to pay the state pay to the men already mustered, and I send this letter by him.

I enclose seventy dollars (\$70), forty-five (\$45) of which is to pay Mrs. Harris' semi-annual interest due April 3<sup>rd</sup>, and the other \$25 for you.

I shall probably be at home before the 1<sup>st</sup> of April, but lest something should occur to detain me, and having a good opportunity to send, I forward the money for Mrs. H.

I heard from you by Major Austine and Mr. Mead, so I conclude you are tolerably well. Give my love to mother and the children.

I saw Governor Underwood and wife at Lieut. Benedict's lecture on the Battle of Gettysburg at the town hall, Tuesday evening. They inquired for you. I shall spend an evening there soon.

Very affectionately – Your loving husband – Charles

Burlington, April 1<sup>st</sup>, 1864

My Dear Wife,

I received your letter of last Sunday in due season. You are anxious that I should come home. I am anxious to be at home more, but I have not yet been able to leave nor do I now see how I can go Saturday night or even until at least the end of another week, consistent with my duty. You cannot have much knowledge nor for away correct estimate of my duties here.

I have under my command four companies and two squads of mustered men and in squads of unmustered men. The first are reported to General Pitcher, the second to General Washburn. During the past two days I have had over one hundred men, twenty non-commissioned officer and 4 commissioned officers out recruiting. I have here to control all this motley crew but four commissioned officers, includes my acting adjutant, and quartermaster – Lt. Hibbard. I report daily to General Pitcher and General Washburn, besides corresponding with those recruiting. In the middle of the day I have a few hours but from three pm to 11 am., it is work – work.

Last Sunday I dined at Governor Underwood, and Ms. Keith of Montpelier was there. We had a fine time. They all desired kind remembrance to you. Mr. Keith has sold out at Montpelier and gone to Chicago in a large business and Mrs. K follows 1<sup>st</sup> May. She is a lovely, motherly woman. You cannot have forgotten her.

Just now George F. Edmonds, and wife rode out to the grounds and invited me to dinner tomorrow. These are the extent of my lapses or chances.

I am very well indeed. We are enlisting men quite rapidly. We have as yet no major, no surgeon here, no quartermaster, nor no adjutant nor no nothing. The truth is I am one of those universal geniuses who can do well for a time but sing. So long as all goes well the authorities are satisfied. Another mustering in takes place next week but I will try and come here before long.

Love to all and thanks for spring buds. Kiss our darlings.

I am dear wife,

Your loving husband – Charles.

Burlington, April 4<sup>th</sup>, 1864

My Dear Wife;

Yours of the 10<sup>th</sup> and Lizzie's little letter were duly received. All things in military are uncertain. Tuesday three more companies were mustered in and I think another will be mustered in this week besides leaving mustering for the remaining two companies.

Tuesday we supposed we should remain here until May to recruit the balance. Tuesday night peremptory orders were received to arm, equip, clothes and pay the mustered companies this week and start them Monday for Annapolis, Maryland. So my dear wife, I cannot visit you again. I am the only field officer with nearly a full regiment, and I must work day and night to get ready. We need ten days to do four days work in, but we shall go through Brattleboro Monday afternoon and I shall dearly like to see you and the children at the depot. Keep up good heart my love and all will be well.

Surgeon Edson has arrived and is on duty and I have an Adjutant but no quartermaster. Brian J. Duley has been appointed to the last named post, but he is with the Army of the Potomac; so is Reynolds the major.

You can hardly conceive how busy we all are to get ready. Each man has to sign his name to eleven different pay rolls for bounty, advance, premium of \$2 allotment and state pay and these rolls all to make out. Then all the clothing and arms and camp and garrison equipage of four companies are to be issued and the regiment inspected and leaves in four days.

My health is excellent and I am as hearty as a buck. I am better without tobacco then with.

If you have some spare rations you may have me some at the depot Monday afternoon from three to six o'clock.

When I get time I will write Lizzie a letter. I hope she will write me when you do.

I will give you some money when I go through. My love to mother, and the little ones –

Your Loving husband. – Charles.

Alexandria, Virginia  
Friday, Noon – April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1864

My Dear Wife,

The 17<sup>th</sup> Regiment has just arrived at this city, our destination having been changed at Baltimore by telegraph from Major General Burnside. When, where, or how we go from here I know not. I only know that I am here and tired out but well with the exception of the severe cold.

We arrived at New Haven, Connecticut at 1 o'clock a.m., Tuesday morning when we took the steamer Continental for New York, arriving at that city at 8 a.m. After marching to Polk Barracks, I reported to General Stannard. Securing transportation during the day at 5 p.m., we went aboard steamers for South Amboy then taking the cars for Philadelphia which city we reached about daylight Wednesday morning. Here commenced our difficulties. We waited and waited for transportation, expecting it every moment, until 4 o'clock p.m., when the freight cars were ready to take us to Baltimore. I went up Philadelphia as far as Chestnut Street and saw John R. Gaut of the house of Copper thevail and company Publishers. He was raised in Westminster Ms., and taught the academy there. I purchased me an excellent saber also, having bought a pistol in New York. I also got a haversack having lost mine with your nice rations that remained unconsumed in New York. I cared nothing for the haversack but I did for its contents as they were from home. But this commanding a new regiment with no other field officer is exhausting work.

Well, we got away from Philadelphia at 4 pm., Wednesday, and arrived at Baltimore 4 a.m., Thursday. Marching two miles across the city guided by a policeman we found at the Washington Depot and a breakfast. In arranging for transportation we were detained for the 31<sup>st</sup> Maine, which with us and other regiments were sent along only the day pervious. But we got away about 10 ½ o'clock and reached Washington at 2-½ pm., having as I said before had our direction changed. We reached Alexandria at 9 ½ am, this morning by boat from Washington.

Here we are to report to Col. Bliss of the 7<sup>th</sup> Rhode Island when we can find him. In the meantime, the regiment with the 31<sup>st</sup> Maine will go into the "Soldiers' Rest," a splendid structure for the accommodation of men in such cases.

I have not time to write more now only to say the weather is fine, grass is green and gardens are coming fine.

Give my love to the children and mother. I am my dear wife, always yours, loving husband – Charles.

PS. Direct to my official address and add "Washington, DC."

Camp Near Alexandria, Virginia, April 26, 1864

My Dear Wife,

Our regiment is now brigaded and don't you think Col. S. G. Griffin of the 6<sup>th</sup> New Hampshire is the brigade commander. The brigade consists of the 6<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, and 11<sup>th</sup> New Hampshire, 31<sup>st</sup> and 32<sup>nd</sup> Maine and the 17<sup>th</sup> Vermont and is the second brigade, second division of the 9<sup>th</sup> Army Corps.

We move tomorrow morning, the lord and General Burnside probably know where. The orders therefore were received this evening at 8 o'clock. I have not yet seen Col. Griffin although he was at my quarters today, as I was in Washington to procure blanks for the regiment. Burnside's whole command is nearby. We go with six days rations. The Division commanders are Gen. Crittenden 1<sup>st</sup>, General Parke 2<sup>nd</sup>, and General Wilcox 3<sup>rd</sup> while General Ferrero commands the niggers of whom there are several regiments. I have it from good authority that Grant has over 150,000 men beside Burnside's and Butler's commands in the Army of the Potomac. Richmond is undoubtedly to be taken if men and means can do it.

This is taking the field early – much difficult from my other campaign. The regiment is suffering from measles and mumps.

I will write you again as soon as may be.

The pear, peach, and plum trees are in bloom; lettuce is large enough to eat and things are quite early.

My love to mother and the dear little ones. I would write more at length but I have had to work hard early and late. We ought to remain in camp six weeks for drill to be good for anything, but as we do not I do not think much will be required of us.

Your Loving husband – Charles

No. 3

Headquarters, 17<sup>th</sup> Vermont Volunteers  
Camp at Bristow Station, Virginia  
April 30<sup>th</sup>, 1864

My Dear Wife,

I have not yet heard a word from home since I bid you goodbye at the Depot in Brattleboro, for we have been moving almost constantly; however, I expect we shall commence getting our mail regularly tomorrow.

We were encamped near Alexandria from Friday afternoon of last week until Wednesday morning of this week, but there was so much to do in getting the regiment in trim, such as supplying spare parts of arms, organizing our quartermaster and commissary departments, and in getting necessary blanks, as well as in turning over all surplus baggage for an immediately active campaign, that it did not seem like rest.

Well, we started Wednesday morning and marched to Fairfax Courthouse that night when we encamped on precisely the same ground on which the 16<sup>th</sup> pitched the night of the 11<sup>th</sup> December 1862. I immediately left the regiment and went to the house of Spencer Jackson, where I boarded when I was Provost Marshall and when I was sick in Feb. 1863. The people were quite glad to see me and gave me a nice supper. I remained two hours, and then returned to camp. The next morning we marched to this place and encamped for the night. The next day we lay in line awaiting orders, which we received at 4 pm., to go into camp nearby. We are now close by where Col. Veazey was encamped in May 1863 while I was seven miles in advance at Catlett's Station on the Alexandria and Orange Railroad and on the ground on which the fight occurred October 14<sup>th</sup>, 1863 during Meade's retreat from the Rappahannock to Bull Run. Shells, shot, and broken equipments mark the spot. We have relieved the troops that formerly were in the 5<sup>th</sup> corps guarding the railroad while they have gone to the front. It looks as if we were to remain here a while guarding the common excursions of Grant's Potomac army during the now impending battle, and forming the reserve. I am glad of some such arrangement just now for I could not take such undrilled troops into the field without some misgivings. I shall improve the time in drill let it be longer or shorter.

As I before wrote you we are in the 2<sup>nd</sup> brigade, 2<sup>nd</sup> division of the 9<sup>th</sup> Army Corps. The 1<sup>st</sup> Division is commanded by Gen. T. L. Crittenden of Kentucky; the 2<sup>nd</sup> by Gen. Parke, who is now detached as chief of Burnside's staff and whose place in temporary supplied by Col. S. G. Griffin of the 6<sup>th</sup> New Hampshire; the 3<sup>rd</sup> division is commanded by Gen. Orlando B. Wilcox, and the 4<sup>th</sup> (Made up of colored troops) by General Ferrero. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade (Col. Griffin's) is now commanded by Col. Herbert B. Titters of the 9<sup>th</sup> New Hampshire. He is from Chesterfield and an old acquaintance of mine. This brigade is composed of the 6<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, and 11<sup>th</sup> New Hampshire, the 17<sup>th</sup> Vermont and the 31<sup>st</sup>, and 32<sup>nd</sup> Maine. The last three are new regiments, two of which are commanded by Lieutenant Colonels and the 32<sup>nd</sup> by a major. None of them yet being full regiments.

There is soon to be a decisive battle fought between Grant and Lee or a retreat on the part of Lee. If we were the rebellion will be seriously hurt; if the rebels succeed then will follow

recognition by foreign powers of the Southern Confederacy and an indefinite prolongation of the war. The importance of the battle and its immense consequences are fully appreciated on both sides and the battle will consequently be fought with a vigor a power and a severity commensurate thereto. It is said that Grant's army will number 150,000 men besides Burnside's command, that Smith under Butler has been reinforced by Gilmore from Charleston and by other troops. On the other hand Lee never before commanded an army so large as he now has near Orange Courthouse.

Col. Griffin accosted me on the march the other day. The only time I have seen him nearby and inquire for you as to your health, etc.

My health is now very good. I have got over my cold so nearly that it occasion me no serious inconvenient. I have a pleasant companion in Major Reynolds, an excellent staff, and we got long finely. Love to our dear children and to mother.

Your loving husband -- Charles

Bristow Station, Virginia  
May 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1864

My Dear Wife,

Your first letter was received this morning very gladly I can assure you.

You refer to the pleasantest winter we have just spent together. It was the pleasantest, happiest winter of my life, and that is saying much. Wife and children complete the family circle. The recollection of these happy hours will go with me everywhere and morning and evening will form the subject of thought.

I have but a moment to write now. Having picked some pansies and other flowers on the field of last fall's battle at Bristow Station I send them in a letter to Lizzie. You need not tell her that rebel blood enriched the ground on which they grew.

Love to the children and mother.

Your Loving Husband – Charles.

Please tell Mr. Brown to send back numbers of the Phoenix.

Near Salem Church, four miles from Fredericksburg  
May 15<sup>th</sup>, 1864

My Dear Wife,

One week ago today, I penciled a few lines to you and forwarded them by Col. Keifer to Washington, from thence to be mailed to you. I do not know whether you have received them or not. In either case I will recapitulate.

Wednesday May 4<sup>th</sup>, we left Bristow and marched past Catlett's to Bealeton four miles from Rappahannock Station. The next day we crossed the Rappahannock River and marching southeasterly crossed the Rapidan at Germania Ford, marching two or three miles further we encamped for the night. At 1:30 am., Friday morning we renewed our march and soon after sunrise we were in line of battle. The 17<sup>th</sup> drove in a skirmish line in a short time and held the position until noon when we were withdrawn. In the forenoon, we lost one killed and fifteen or twenty wounded, among the latter, Capt. Brown of Company A, whose left arm was amputated in consequence thereof near the left shoulder. In the afternoon we were removed further to the left and about 2 pm., we were hotly engaged with Longstreet's troops. It was in the woods where artillery could not be used; so the engagement was close and the musketry firing fearful. We made one charge on our own hook and carried one rifle pit but not being supported could not hold it. So we were forced to withdraw ten rods. Soon after, while on one knee the better to discuss the enemy and to direct the fire of my men (smoking my pipe meanwhile) a minee ball struck me on the right side of my head against my hat band. It cut a hole four inches long backwards and upwards as my head was pitched forward at the time, and about two and a half inches long in my scalp. The blow did not make me reel but it bleed with such profusions from the breaking of a branch of the temporal artery that I concluded to go to the rear, thinking I might faint if I remained and then if repulsed I should fall into the hands of the rebels. My wound was bound up and I was sent to the hospital in an ambulance when my wound was bound up and I was sent to the Hospital in an ambulance where my wound was dressed by Dr. Child of the 10<sup>th</sup> Vermont formerly Assistant Surgeon of the 1<sup>st</sup> Vermont. He with other officers, dined at our home in August 1861.

The regiment continued in the fight under Major Reynolds until after dark, making considerable advance. The men fought splendidly. The losses this day were 9 killed, 61 wounded and 7 missing out of 313 guns and 20 officers that went into the fight. Capt. Kenfield of Company C was shot through the left arm and Lieut. Martin of E through the right leg. The 1<sup>st</sup> Vermont Brigade lost terribly in that fight, but they were on the right.

The 17<sup>th</sup> remained in position until Saturday morning when they were withdrawn. They marched to Chancellorsville and encamped until Monday afternoon when I rejoined them. I was advised to go to Washington and remain until my wound healed but I would not consent. Monday afternoon we marched out on the Plank Road towards Fredericksburg and encamped until Tuesday noon. Then we marched southerly five miles rather towards Spotsylvania Court House and arrived on the left of our general line of battle just as it was opening in that quarter. We lay in line of battle behind rifle pits that night, then being skirmishing all night long in front. Wednesday was much the same until four o'clock pm., when we were moved to a new position.

A long rain storm coming on and it then raining furiously upon the advice of Dr. Edson I went to the teams in rear of the hospital and have not been with the regiment since. I understand that at day, light the next morning the regiment was ordered forward with the rest of the brigade. Although it rained in torrents they drove in the enemy's skirmishers and then charged his rifle pits but unsuccessfully. Here the loss was great. I was in the Hospital assisting in dressing the wounds of my men as they came in as long as I could stand up, and the sight was fearful. The regiment continued fighting nearly all that day and part of the next, and my last report from the Adjutant was that there were less than 130 guns left. Certainly of all that went into the fight on the morning of the 6<sup>th</sup> nearly 3/5ths are killed or wounded. Some of the wounded must have fallen into the enemy's hands when we were forced to retire from that charge of Thursday morning. But the men have sustained the reputation of Vermont. They have not faltered, nor did they lose their colors as others did in the futile charge although they advanced as fast and as far.

The mortality among officers in these battles is fearful, but I do not know names well enough to particularize.

The army changed position yesterday to the left or east of Spotsylvania Court House, but the line of battle is advanced quite as much as heretofore. As a general result of last week's fighting the Union Army has taken 17,000 prisoners and nearly 50 pieces of artillery, while we have not lost but very few prisoners not retaken say less than 1000 and but 3 guns. But here we are and there is some terrible fighting to be done unless Lee retreats, which I do not apprehend.

The 11<sup>th</sup> Vermont, my first regiment, reported to General Meade yesterday. Mr. Crandall was well he is 2<sup>nd</sup> principal musician.

My wound is doing well it will be healed in a week or ten days, but if the weather is good I shall resume command of my regiment in a day or two.

I have not received but two letters from you – the last was handed me May 5<sup>th</sup>. It was dated May 1<sup>st</sup>. Tomorrow a mail goes from have the first allowed since the fight commenced, and I have impressed it to write you.

Do not give yourself uneasiness if you do not hear regularly from me for I shall be so situated that frequently. I cannot write when I would nor send if I should write. It is not here as in our campaign of last summer there are no post offices on the line of march. The country is so denude that a lady could not exist it is all that I can do by hook and by crook to live. Nothing can be bought rations are cut down to a low figure, transportation reduced to three wagons to a brigade and ect., but who cares if only we can win. My love to our dear children and to mother.

Your Loving husband - I shall always remain – Charles

Somewhere in Spotsylvania County, Virginia  
10 miles south of Fredericksburg  
May 20<sup>th</sup>, 1864

My Dear Wife,

Last night I received your third and fourth letters, the last without date but probably written the 8<sup>th</sup> inst. I have written you twice once the 8<sup>th</sup> and again the 15<sup>th</sup>.

I have nothing new or interesting to write you just now. My wound is nearly healed and I am again with the regiment. The teams have come up and the quartermaster's desk is out so I am writing a few letters of business pertaining to regimental matters. You shall have a portion of my time.

The position of my brigade is changed from right to left again, and we are quiet for the last 18 hours. But either all along the line or on some portion of it fighting has been in progress every day since the 10<sup>th</sup> inst., and I may say with one day's exception since the 3<sup>rd</sup> of May. The 17<sup>th</sup> were under fire six consecutive days and nights in the front line, protected the last five of the days protected by breastworks. The 12<sup>th</sup> inst., was a day of sever fighting and again our loss was heavy. Up to this time we have had wounded 145 men and 7 officers, of whom 19 were killed outright and several others other have since died. Our stragglers have come in so we have now a little over 200 men in the regiment. If we do not go into a fight again we shall increase this number by the accession of men left on the way sick with measles and etc.

Speaking of our regiment and brigade being in the front line. We lay behind works thrown up to the height of four to six feet and the rebs the same at the distance of a half rifle shot. If a man raises his head above the works on either side pop goes a musket and duck goes the head at the sight of smoke. But few are hit in this way, yet it soon becomes tedious business for troops have to be constantly on the alert day and night.

Our lines have advanced within the week a mile or two in some parts more, but how soon we shall drive Lee off I have no means of knowing. We have lost heavily and so has he. On both sides it cannot fall far short of 100,000 men. But our army is in good spirits and they fight well. The enemy fights with the daring and nerve of desperation. We have received reinforcements including the 11<sup>th</sup> Vermont, which is in the old Brigade. By the way that same brigade has suffered fearfully. It has been reduced from 2400 or over to 900 but the addition of the 11<sup>th</sup> with 1500 guns being it up again. Lt. Col. John S. Tyler and Capt. Wales of Brattleboro were wounded and Capt. D. W. Farr was killed. It will be a sad blow to his young wife.

You will read all about the fight in the papers so I will not attempt any description. We gave the reporter of the Boston Journal a list of our killed and wounded – a brother of “Carlton” so you will see it there.

The army is on 2/3 rations – no whiskey and some days nothing to eat save perhaps one “hard tack” a meal. But then we do not complain.

Yesterday I saw some basalt and yellow Harrison roses. The young peaches are as big as bullets and numberless. Wheat that has not been trampled is in blossom.

The rainstorm of the last ten days is over and the sun is shining hot. I am out in the lot in the full bluge writing and talking to one and other as they come up for something. So you will excuse this rambling letter.

If the stove won't work you have better swap it off for an exclusively coal burner when you change from wood to coal, or continue to burn wood in the kitchen as your prefer.

Kiss our dear little children for their absent papa and tell them that he thinks of them and their dear mother very often. Love to write –

From Your loving husband – Charles

In the Woods 6 miles South West Hanover Town &  
15 miles North East of Richmond, Virginia  
Monday Eve - May 30<sup>th</sup>, 1864

My Dear Wife,

I wrote you on Friday, 20<sup>th</sup> inst., but I understand today that the mail in which it was put has not yet been forwarded to Washington, owing to the precarious nature of our communications in that direction.

After the desultory fighting near Spotsylvania Court House lasting from the 9<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup> of May, in which we got the better of the rebels on the whole we suddenly struck camp and commenced moving at sundown on Saturday 21<sup>st</sup>. We moved in every conceivable direction and half of the night I supposed from the general direction that we were retreating towards Fredericksburg. But at sunrise we marched all night, my fears were dispelled. We were in Caroline County. Sunday we resumed our march after breakfast and went through Bowling Green, encamping a mile and a half south west of that place. It was evident that General Grant was swing around to the left of the enemy and confounding him by leaving his second base of supplies at Fredericksburg, as he had before left the our near Rappahannock Station. The indomitable, gallant Hancock with the 2<sup>nd</sup> corps was ahead and the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> corps were also in motion. Monday we kept on and arrived near the North Anna River opposite a bridge and ford a few rods above the crossing of the Richmond and Fredericksburg Railroad. Tuesday we drew rations in the morning and in the afternoon crossed the bridge under a moderate discharge of shells. The crossing had been made extremely difficult by the erection of no less than 15 redoubts for artillery and some day formidable rifle pits, which completely commanded it; but Hancock had so hotly pursued the retiring rebels on a road above that he crossed on their own pontoons and made these very batteries of the enemy untenable. It was neatly done and saved us thousands of live had we sooner attempted to make the move which was so successful. Only one man in the division was hurt and he was but slightly wounded. (I am now lying in line of battle and there is heavy firing in my front by the skirmishers. It is so dark that I will postpone.)

Tuesday morning, May 31<sup>st</sup>,

After crossing we lay in line of battle near the stream until 11 o'clock pm., a drenching rain falling nearly all the time on our heads half of which were unprotected by a gum blanket. The 17<sup>th</sup> was then ordered to report to Col. Curtin commanding the first brigade of our division. We were put in front and directed to commence entrenching. Just as our breastwork was complete we were ordered to establish a few line further in front. This we built with now and then a stray ball whistling by us.

The men were now quite tired and were in hopes after breakfast to rest a little, but another line in advance was ordered so we built, Wednesday morning our third line. Here we lay on our arms without fires, sending out skirmishes and watching the progress of events. Of the skirmishers sent out, one was shot through the lungs and will probably not recover; another man was slightly wounded. That day I was Divisional Field Officer of the Day and had charge of the pickets and skirmishers. We attempted to advance one line of pickets but after an hour's vigorous firing were compelled to give it up. Before 12 pm., that night all our troops were withdrawn

across the river. At 2 am., I went out and withdrew our pickets so silently that the enemy's pickets did not fire a gun, although in some places they were not ten rods distant. At day light were all across and the bridge on fire.

Friday morning after breakfast at the place of our encampment Monday night we commenced marching in a round about way though the southernly part of Caroline County to some point on the Pamunkey River. Our progress was slow as the engineers had to repair bad places in the roads for the passage of trains. Hence we were unable to encamp until 1:30 am., Saturday morning. The march was resumed, the rate of progress continuing as the day before, and at 12 o'clock Saturday night we crossed the Pamunkey without opposition at Dabney's Ferry opposite Hanover. Encamping until daylight we moved about three miles south westerly, threw up entrenchments and remained during the day. Here I washed myself washed out my undershirt and put it on again. Having a chance to get to my valise, I got a clean shirt and stockings, and got out of my dirty clothes and had them washed, the first time since leaving Bristow. Sunday night was the first unobstructed nights rest the regiment or brigade had enjoyed since leaving Spotsylvania.

We call it a good night if we can sleep without lying on our arms and jumping up any sound of a musket, although it be in the open air with our clothes on and a rubber blanket under us.

Monday we advanced about three miles towards Richmond and encountered the enemy in battle array. All day there was skirmishing all along a line of three miles and the 2<sup>nd</sup> corps in our right and 5<sup>th</sup> on our left were engaged warmly from 6 ½ o'clock pm, until long after dark. Our regiment is now the second line of battle for the first time since we crossed the Rapidan, having heretofore been always in front. But we have the satisfaction of believing that we have done our duty, and we know that our labors are appreciated by those above us.

This morning there is skirmishing along the line. I omitted to say that we are considerably in advance of the where the rebs commenced erecting rifle pits Sunday night and we steadily drove them all day yesterday. How some we shall receive orders to advance I do not know probably some.

For the last week we have been on two third rations, and food is at a premium. I saw a soldier pay two dollars for six hard tack to one of his comrades who had saved all he could get.

I am now sitting on a rail in the rear of my regiment, three or four rods behind the crest of a hill where the men lay, my back against a tree, a cracker box board in my lap. My provisions are around me as I have just eaten breakfast, consisting of a nice beef steak cut an inch and a half thick which I broiled over a twig fire to a turn, two hard tack and two cups of all of which I cooked myself, and it is the best breakfast I have had for a month. The beef was cut out of a heifer shot by one of my regiment where we halted yesterday. The commissary sells his beef to officers just as it come for 16 cents per pound, but this cost me nothing. I got about 8 pounds as my share for giving permission to forage. Live cattle are dinner along with the troops from which we get our ordinary supply. Sugar costs us 15 cents and coffee 40. The latter I do not drink more than three or five times per week. One day my boys foraged for me a chicken, hot hoecakes, new butter and milk, but to offset that I have been three days in secession on a diet of six hardtack per day and cold water of a poor quality to wash it down. But then I can live as easily as anybody. It would amaze you to see some of the shifts for a living, which the boys resort to so passing through a field of potatoes that had come up the seed potatoes were dug up and eaten. Green apples as big as bullets are sliced up and stewed – same with green peaches which are as large as English Walnuts, garlic are pulled and eaten raw, hard corn in parched or fried in stew

pans and eaten with a relish. During such a march on an active campaign like the present no vegetables nor vinegar is issued. Nothing but beef driven along and slaughtered as is needed, given out, cooked and eaten before it has cooled, hard bread, sugar, coffee, with once a week or two tea and dried apple for officers to purchase in very small quantities.

I resumed command of the regiment on the 22<sup>nd</sup> inst., and have been fully able to its duties. My wound is healing rapidly and will not require dressing more than a week longer. By taking a 3 grain quinine pill, my bowels are kept in due subjection. I am quite well and in good spirits as it looks much as if, no accident befalling me, I shall be able to be in Richmond perhaps in season to celebrate the 4<sup>th</sup> of July.

Incoming through the northerly part of Caroline co., I saw the scarlet trumpet honey suckles giving wild besive the runs and in fall bloom. I enclose specimen for Lizzie. I also the sweet scented honey suckle in bloom, large holly trees bigger than our Scotch larch, and a hundred years old in blossom, much as one hawthorn blossoms. It is a splendid country, peas in pod, beans and melons up and growing finely. Come a foot in height and wheat in milk in some spots, here for instance.

There is no use in talking about staring out the rebels. I am satisfied that humbug story would not be repeated could our Vermonters see the enormous fields of corn planted – sometimes more than 100 acres in a single lot. Every other cultivation not excepted wheat, cotton and tobacco yielded precedence to the great American cereal.

The inhabitants are secehs without mitigation in Carolina, Spotsylvania, and Hanover Counties – so far as I have learned. There is not to be found a single well man from 16 to 60 at home all gone to the war. Their families not only give then up cheerfully but home sentiment impels them to the field. Would that the north was as united and earnest in this great struggle as the south. They live plain and short of luxuries to carry out there patriotism. Close by over fighting a family left to avail one shells and our boys look their property including two barrels of flour for which they head of the family assured me he paid \$300. . .

In the Woods  
June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1864

My Dear Wife,

Yours of the 22<sup>nd</sup> ult., was received this afternoon and as I am informed that letters sent to Brigade Headquarter tomorrow morning will be forwarded to White House the earliest opportunity. I could not neglect this chance of acknowledging the reception of your kind letter.

I have nothing new to add to the long letter I sealed this morning and directed to you. I have laid in my bought house all day (now 3 pm) and rested from the fatiguing labors for a week past, and my men have been drawing rations and resting in the lea of the breastwork constructed last night. The rebs are skirmishing in my front and right. Their skirmishing and sharpshooters sending balls from the right nearly athwait my camp and directly over my headquarters from four to fifteen feet above my head and our artillery occasionally gives them a shell in nearly a counter direction. Considering all this my nerves are quite steady – do you not think so. I feel just as safe inside my works as at home, not one of my men within having yet been hit. Although at times there is some artful dodging and men will be content to move about in a meek and lowly manner. The whizzing of balls is not particularly soothing to unquiet nerves. Zip! they come and cut off leaves spot a tree, or hum in the distance. Our danger under our works is mostly from balls that hit a tree and then ricochet there is no telling where.

In this I will enclosed the flowers for Lizzie mentioned in my other litter but omitted in the sending.

Do just as you please about sending Lizzie to school. I think it would do her no harm, but I would not attempt to put her up to study.

I saw some ripe strawberries in a garden Monday, picked by one of Col. Griffin's staff. They looked good but the number was so limited that I did not tantalize my taste with them.

Love to all – Your loving husband – Charles.

Wednesday, June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1864

Just as I had concluded the previous sheet I was ordered to move forward. We advanced about half a mile and proceed to entrench. At this we continued until 3 pm, when each regiment was ordered to advance having just previous thrown forward our skirmishers, relieving those already out. Accordingly we advanced in line of battle down into through and up an ugly ravine 80 feet in depth and filled with brush and timber driving in the enemy's skirmishers. I was ordered to proceed to the edge of an open field, but on gaining the crest the fire was too hot so I halted and formed just in its rear, being then farther in advance than any other regiment in the brigade. At dark we moved and worked all night in erecting formidable earth works. On our skirmish line we had one man shot dead and seven wounded, one and, I think two mortally. The sharpshooters are pegging away at us this morning and the balls come sufficiently near for comfort.

Yesterday before commencing these last entrenchments shell, grape, and canister were thrown at us but they all went over our heads. We are now lying in our entrenchments waiting developments while our generals are comparing notes and surveying the field.

I received your letter of the 15<sup>th</sup> on Wednesday May 25<sup>th</sup>, and was glad to learn that you received mine announcing my wound so promptly.

In a few days our base of supplies will probably be at White House instead of Port Royal on the Rappahannock and then our communications will be more regular I suspect that one last supply train from Port Royal came in last night. We are now rationed up to June 5<sup>th</sup> inclusive and this indicates that our supplies are on the way in the direction of the White House. Indeed Grant's left and General Smith's connect and communicate.

I think that we will get a big battle at Mechanicsville, where you will recollect Keyes fought the rebs two years since. If not their policy will be to fight every inch with skirmishers and sharpshooters, digging line after line of entrenchments. This will make our progress slow, but I have full faith that it will be sure.

Colonel Griffin is a most excellent officer, energetic, impartial and ready to assume any responsibility to promote the efficiency of the service. A few days since he put a captain of his old regiment in command of the 31<sup>st</sup> Maine over the major, who was a miserable officer as may be judged by the fact that he continued to serve under a captain and told me he was glad to be relieved of much responsibility. The colonel treats me with much consideration and evidently is satisfied with the regiment. The 17<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> New Hampshire (his regiment) are on the best of terms. His Lt. Col. (Peason) was killed on the 25<sup>th</sup> during a heavy picket skirmish that day I was Field Officer of the Day. He leaned upon the breastwork surveying the fight with his glass I was in front. A sharpshooter who could not see me in the woods shot him through this head and he died in an hour. He was brave to a fault for he would expose himself unnecessarily. This I will not do. When duty leads me then I mean to follow regardless of consequences and no further. I think too much of my family to be reckless. Love to mother and our dear little ones.

Your loving devoted husband – Charles.

In the woods,  
Hanover Co, Virginia  
June 4<sup>th</sup>, 1864

My Dear Wife,

My last of letter should have been June 1<sup>st</sup> instead of June 2<sup>nd</sup>. The next day June 2<sup>nd</sup>, at daylight we abandoned our position and moved southeasterly about three miles. While at a halt we were attacked by the rebels. The 17<sup>th</sup> with the other regiments in the 2<sup>nd</sup> brigade were immediately placed in line of battle behind some entrenchments thrown up by the enemy at the right of where the battle was going on. Our position was critical, and we were all night in expectation of an attack, which fortunately was not made. It was raining and cheerless night, fatigued as we were with marching and fighting and entrenching. The next morning soon after sunrise the 1<sup>st</sup> brigade moved forward past us and assaulted the enemy who had strongly entrenched himself the night previous just across a muddy ravine and on the brow of a gentle – the slope. The brigade went in gallantly, crossed the ravine and attempted to gain the crest but they were met with such a galling fire that they could not attain their object even with the assistance of the 9<sup>th</sup> New Hampshire and 31<sup>st</sup> and 32<sup>nd</sup> Maine Regiments, which had been sent to their relief. They could only hold what they had gained and entrench in a partially sheltered spot. Their loss was heavy. In 58<sup>th</sup> Mass, had their Lieutenant Colonel wounded and major and senior captain killed.

In the afternoon the remaining regiments of the 2<sup>nd</sup> brigade were moved to the right of their former position and then swung around at many a right angles with the line of battle and against and at right angles with the enemy's left. In the midst of a galling front and enfilading fire wont came that were we to change and take a battery that had been stillness by our sharpshooters but could not be withdrawn. Being the senior officer of the three regiments on the ground I declined to order the change as we remained and present round in as smart and well-directed fire us we could. It was evident that the enemy had a very strong line in an extended rifle pit in our front and sharpshooters on our right and the right of our rear. Three branches from tree of opposite direction struck close to me at the same moment. Shortly after one right was swing around and we relieve to the end of a road which was nearly a prolongation of the main line of battle just as we commenced retiring by refusing our right, our face all the time to the foe and our men firing a fire opened from the whole length of the enemy's rifle pit, which had been supposed to be nearly or quite empty and a masked battery threw grape and canister. The whole movement was an error let it have been ordered by where it may. Our loss was as follows: killed – Sgt. Charles N Rood Co D, wounded Co. C. Silas J. Moulton, John Fan, Jason French, Co. D. W. W. Goodspeed; Co. David Stone, Benjamin Young, Co F. George D. Stannard, Israel Mossey; Francis Curtis, Co. G. Sgt. Benjamin F Giddings, Privates Isaac M. Winson, Stephen Connell, Thomas E. Bray, Norman W. Vancor, Co. B. Capt. Andrew J. Davis, Total 1 Killed, 15 wounded.

In the night the enemy retired leaving baggage to some extend. This morning I examined their position. It was quite strong, but the trees and ground gave evidence of them having suffered severely shot and shell had came every time so much that as high as I hears. I could not cover a sound spot with my hat. Their dead men are not half buried.

In the night we again entrenched ourselves in a new position, and today we are at rest but under orders to be prepared to move at a moment's notice. We received a mail yesterday and again today, but no letters from home. Today I got the Phoenix of May 20 and 23<sup>rd</sup>.

Sunday June 5<sup>th</sup>, 1864

In a few minutes after the above was written we swung around nearly two miles to the southeast a little nearer Richmond. We are now about nine miles from Richmond in a north easterly direction, one mile from Cold Harbor, whenever that maybe, a dozen miles above White House, and of course between Pamunkey and Chickahominy Rivers. It seems to be the settled understanding of our brigade officers that we shall advance to Richmond only by slow approaches and by entrenching ourselves as fast as we advance. We now connected on one left with the 18<sup>th</sup> corps, General Wm. F. Smith commanding. The 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade is building entrenchments in our advance 125 rods just in the rear of our skirmishers our time will come next.

All the movements of such an army are of course quite certain and depended largely upon the conduct of the enemy. It is quite safe to assume that we shall have to fight our way into Richmond foot by foot and the fighting will be severe. But I am will to work and to suffer deprivations if I can enjoy the proud satisfaction of leading the 17<sup>th</sup> Regiment into the rebel capital.

I see by the Phoenix that LTC. Tyler is dead. He was a brave officer. So was Major Dudley. Brattleboro has indeed paid for tribute to patriotism. But then our country is entitled justly and richly to one's services and lives and no man who is able to go should every lay any claim to patriotism who will not willing rally around her standard in the time of her peril.

As usual we are under fire today, some shells having stuck within a few rods of me. But I have a little leisure as I am Divisional Officer of the Day, and one of our brigades is in first of the others; thus we have but one length to pickets and there is a brigade Field Officer of the Day to attend to that and report to me. I, in the meantime, reporting to corps officer of the day.

My health is quite good. My wound heals slowly owing to so much exposure, but it gives me no pain and scarcely no uneasiness.

We now receive our mails with tolerable regularity and shall some have them daily by way of White House.

Can you get me a hat at Chamberlin's shaped about like my light colored one but black. I am wearing one with the rim nearly off and twenty holes in it, picked up in the road. My other one was left in the Wilderness with a six-inch hole in one side. If you can and will mail it to me I would like it. There is no store, no sending to Washington, nor no nothing so far as purchasing any article of clothing is concerned and dead men's hats if found are buried with them.

I don't think we shall be paid until after our next muster which will not be until June 30. Sometimes thereafter I shall, if I live, get four months pay and then I will send you probably \$400.

Give my love to Lizzie and Charlie and to Mother. I should like to see you all of it were practicable. It seems six months since I left Vermont. So much have passed through.

Your loving husband Charles.

On the road from White House to Mechanicsville, Virginia  
June 6<sup>th</sup>, 1864

My Dear Wife,

Your favor of the 22<sup>nd</sup> was received Monday morning this very day just as I was relieved from my duties as Divisional Field Officer of the Day. At 12 o'clock last night I commenced changing our picket line and establishing a new one a step rendered necessary by the withdrawal of the 5<sup>th</sup> corps from our right to our left. This occupied my time up to 8 a.m., when the position of the regiment was somewhat changed. In the afternoon it was sent to support the right wing where after dark we passed a quiet night. We entrenched however.

Tuesday morning was moved back into the woods between the two former positions and was ordered to stack arms and rest. About 3 pm, the enemy run up a battery on ground occupied us on Sunday and abandon the following night, behind their line of skirmishers and commenced a furious shelling directly into and over us. We hugged the earth well but we had men wounded one of whom will lose a leg. As soon as that ceased we moved forward just in rear of the 45<sup>th</sup> PA behind breastworks, but soon left to support the 48<sup>th</sup> PA, near our position the night before, when we again passed a quiet night.

Wednesday morning moved back to our position of Sunday. Find the enemy has advanced this skirmishers into a rifle pit constructed for the purpose directly constructed for the purpose directly on the other side of an open field. Within an hour, Lt. Gibson of Co. D, but temporarily commanding Co. B and Private Wells of same company were wounded, the first in the leg by a musket ball in his thigh, and the latter, by one through the antinor part of his chest from right to left.

General Stannard is in command of a brigade in the 18<sup>th</sup> Corps, and his headquarters are not more than half a mile from us. In a charge made by him Saturday, he lost half of his brigade and he and all his staff were wounded or killed, but he carried the enemy's works. The rebels have a fort within 2/3 of a mile of us mounting heavy guns, and we have erected one that will soon be in readiness to respond.

A few days since the 45<sup>th</sup> PA, dug up in the cellar of a house deserted by its occupants nearly \$2000 in gold and silver. The next day the 9<sup>th</sup> New Hampshire found a large sum of specie secreted in a garden and appropriated it notwithstanding the remonstrance's of the rebel owner. They not only took his corn but made him put the sacks on the backs of their horses. Impudence!

Thursday June 9<sup>th</sup> - remained in position all day without moving. Went to the 18<sup>th</sup> corps and called on General Stannard. He inquired kindly after you. In his charge he lost 50 percent of his men and 70 percent of officers. Company H arrived Wednesday night having been put on guard duty on the way. Capt. Corey has not arrived. He was at Washington at last accounts. I hardly expect to get the box of goodies for sent. I should like them much especially as they come from you and home, the place where my heart is and my through constantly turn.

The 17<sup>th</sup> got quite a complement the other day, which came to my ears last night. Gen. Potter commanding the division said in the leaving of the medical director that he thought highly of the 17<sup>th</sup> Vermont he further observed, "It's a god -d--m good fighting regiment." Leaving out the profanity I am satisfied. Know however, that it is up to any regiment in the division in doing any duty. Its pickets are the only ones in the division that have not yet been driven in.

Rumors are rife that we are to abandon our present position, the 9<sup>th</sup> Army Corps. I mean and move to Turkey Bend on the James River, McClellan's old ground. From the same authentic

(?) source I hear this morning that Fort Darling has surrendered and that General Ewell and 1500 prisoners have been captured.

Enclosed I send that I call a single Japonica. Its petals are white, thick, and of wax like finish. Of course this specimen gives no adequate idea of such flowers for petals like this cannot be pressed. In there natural state they are pure white. The swamps are full of them and their fragrance is delicate sweet and delicious. Lizzie may like it as coming from the Chickahominy swamps.

Can you send we some postages stamps? I am all out and shall scarcely be able to beg or borrow enough write to you. I get enough to eat such as it is, beef, ham, sugar, coffee, tea, and hard bread, with salt, so I have no reason to complain but it is absolutely impassible to buy anything else.

I am my dear wife, your loving husband – Charles

Write as often after as possible.

Camp near James River, Virginia  
June 15<sup>th</sup>, 1864

My Dear Wife,

We reached our present location last evening, having broken camp near Cold Harbor Sunday evening just as soon as dark. We are on a delightful plantation, belonging to one of the "FFV's" who, with his daughters, are in Richmond, situated in a peninsula a little below Harrison's Landing and containing probably 1000 acres of splendid land.

Sunday night we marched all night until 6, Monday morning, nearly in direction White House. The next day at noon we struck Tunstall's Station on the Railroad and from thence nearly in direct line to Long Bridge on the Chickahominy crossing that river Tuesday morning at 8 am. So far as I can learn the whole army is again swing around by one of Grant's flank movements to some point on the right bank of the James precisely where we shall know in a few days. The 18<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, and 9<sup>th</sup> the Corps moved by nearly the same routes, the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> by a route over Bottom Bridge nearer to Richmond. Today I hear heavy cannonading to our left as far up as Malvern Hill and perhaps farther.

Some parts of this country is delightful. You would enjoy traveling through it in peaceful times, and I think you would like such a spot as this plantation. There are some futile spots, interspersed with more than is worn out, on which are oak trees larger than every you saw and monstrous pines. The holly, which is a dwarf in Fairfax county, here grows much larger than our larch, and the Catalpa with its rich blossoms, the clusters of which are much like a horse chestnut only four times the size, of people and white and the magnolia of which I sent you a specimen thinking it a japonica, added to the dense and rich foliage of the cottonwood and other trees, regular one's eyes on a march, and to our interested in such matters serve to relieve weariness. Here we are in a country singularly blessed by Providence, settle two and a half century ago, in the midst of places and scenes almost classic from their historic renown, plantations which produced corn and tobacco more than a hundred years before there was a settlement of civilized men in Brattleboro, with a soil and climate as rich and fine as the sun ever shore upon, and yet it is in all the elements of home comfort, conveniences, means of transportation and communication far, very far behind our fair New England. In all the associations and means of are at the command of these Virginia aristocrats thus is wanting in every one of there so much that is convenient, pleasant and desirable that the very best of them cannot compare with our little but loved and happy home. Could New England be transplanted to Virginia and with half the patient effort and perseverance that is then displayed the farms and homes here would literally bud and blossom as the rose. I get paid for much privations in the opportunity I have to see this part of its or what we trust will soon be United States.

The proceeding of the Baltimore Convention, which I accidentally saw reported in Friday's chimich, was harmonious and striking by suggestive. No better complement or more deserved could be paid Abraham Lincoln than such a nomination. Johnson will add power and strength to the ticket. It is they very ticket I told Col. Veazey in January 1863 should and would be nominated if the men lived. It is the ticket that confounds the democrats and will woefully defeat them even if they nominate the defunct Fremont or the played out McClellan. It already causes them to wince so much that they seriously propose to define their convention, hoping, Micawleir like, that "something" will turn up "to give them a ghost of a chance."

I have not received any letter from you since the one dated May 29, but am expecting a mail tonight or tomorrow. If my letters give you joy, you can imagine the value of yours when I am away from home and all the dear ones of my heart. How comes on the garden? Please have the pears on the three trees nearest the walk so thinned out that not more than two dozen be left on each tree. You must get some strawberries by the time you get this letter. I think the currants this year will be both abundant and of good size. The cutting out of the old wood, if too many new shoots do not come out will conduce this.

I have bought me another horse. It was very necessary for all the baggage carrying and provisions I have during this campaign as well as my forage for five days at a time must be carried on horseback with me or I must go without. Lately I take off my shirts and stockings wash them, wring them out and put them on again immediately; my paper I carry in my haversack and my ink in my pocket. I paid \$130 for a horse that I could buy for \$90 a year and half since, but if he gets killed, I can sometimes get the price back and if he does not I can sell him for about as much as I gave unless he gets injured. When we have been for this last two weeks until Sunday there was not a fold but oak leaves, we have had no hay since May 4<sup>th</sup> and for four days I was out of oats, we being so far from the teams and up in front that the quartermaster did not bring up grain. So all our horses are thin and it required all our efforts to keep them alive. We all now doing better. We have had at best all the campaign but 2/3 rations of forage, but now we steal some corn occasionally and with the good clover of this vicinity we will get them up again.

My health is good, very good and for two weeks. I have been gaining flesh – I am not copulate yet. My appetite is good, but my variety is quite limited. The worst is I can't buy any thing to supply the place of articles used up or lost. I need a large jack knife to cut meats, stick and etc. the . . .

I wrote you about. You never see a patient of the asylum or an Irishman wear such a shocking tile as I have for a month. There are over twenty holes in it the river has all been served on once and part of it twice. My wound is so far healed as not to require dressing. In combing my hair coming to where it was should the comb will slip and tear into the new moisturized skin and keep it a little sore. Can you mail me Harper's weekly when you are done with it. Its resume of the news, as I do not see my newspapers except Phoenix more than once in a week or days would be pleasant.

Tell Lizzie and Charlie that their papa thinks of them very often and looks of their pictures and that of their dear mother very frequently. Love to all

– Your loving husband Charles.